## 'BABEŞ BOLYAI' UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA

## FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

FIELD OF STUDY: MARKETING

## STUDY CONCERNING THE CUSTOMERS PERCEPTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE CULTURAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY ROMANIAN THEATRES AND THEIR IMPACT ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

PHD THESIS SUMMARY

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**KEYWORDS:** performing arts marketing, customer satisfaction, consumer involvement, service attributes in theatres, benefits of arts consumption, goals of cultural consumers, future intentions

## **INTRODUCTION**

The present research approaches elements of arts marketing and offers a wide perspective of marketing applied in performing arts, providing conceptual and practical tools for those interested in this specific field. The present research delivers a comprehensive quantitative analysis and proposes a dual approach when considering the services provided by theatres. The first approach reflects the practical relevance of a study concerning the customer perception towards the services provided by Romanian theatres, emphasizing the concrete results and representing the base for cultural marketing strategies developed in theatres. The second approach provides an academic perspective and develops a new conceptual model of customer satisfaction in performing arts and also tests its validity using specific techniques. The quantitative research has been developed by taking into consideration the services provided by three Romanian theatres: The National Theatre Cluj-Napoca, The National Theatre Târgu-Mureş and The Regina Maria Theatre from Oradea, all these theatres being located in the north-west-central region of Romania. The aim of this research is to fulfill on the one hand the theatres` management needs, and on the other hand, to fulfill the academic requirements by developing a viable conceptual model for research.

# The practical need for developing a study in marketing of performing arts by taking into consideration the Romanian cultural context

Previous studies regarding cultural consumption emphasized a decrease of it in recent years, therefore, the results provided by a deeper study focused on specific cultural institutions, like the present study, could reveal the particular issues that influenced this decrease. New techniques could be approached in order to improve the activity of cultural institutions and to stimulate in this way the cultural consumption. Relevant and specific information obtained as a result of research in certain cultural institutions could offer a better image of what is called cultural consumption in Romania, transcending from a particular approach to a more general approach. With other words, the information obtained as a result of a research in certain cultural particular obtained as a result of a research in certain marketers for developing and implementing new strategies, in order to achieve their objectives of improving the cultural consumption. A study concerning the customers`

perceptions with respect to the services provided by theatres offers pertinent details of cultural consumption in the specific institutions and also provides several means to understand more general aspects related to the cultural consumption. There is an actual need in the Romanian cultural environment of new marketing strategies that contribute to the artistic and financial development of cultural institutions. Therefore, the topic of Romanian consumer`s perceptions regarding the services provided by the theatres explored in the present research covers this managerial need.

## The academic need for developing a study in marketing of performing arts considering the Romanian cultural context

Arts marketing literature in Romania, particularly the literature concerning performing arts marketing is very scarce. The reduced theatre attendance is probably reflected by the lack of specialized literature and studies. This statement is based upon the idea that by not knowing the real situation it is almost impossible to develop and to improve the attendance in the cultural field. As a general concept considered for the present research, the author selected customer satisfaction, which is a subject widely explored in marketing literature. and it has been identified as an antecedent of behavioral intentions of customers and their actual behavior. Higher levels of customer satisfaction contribute to an organization's financial strength, especially through customer retention. The arts marketing literature review corroborates the academic need of studies concerning customer satisfaction in performing arts, by considering a broad set of elements that influence it. In this respect, for this research, a customer satisfaction model was proposed, by considering the attributes of the theatre services (both core and peripheral service attributes), the benefits perceived by customers, the customers' personal goals and also the customers' involvement in the cultural services. All these constructs are considered to influence customer satisfaction, which in turn affects future intentions of customers. The conceptual model proposed for this research is a complex one and it is based on the means-end chain theory. Considering all these statements, the research aims to respond to academic requirements, proposing a conceptual model of customer satisfaction in performing arts which, subsequently, was tested through the structural equation modeling techniques.

# Personal motivations of the author in developing the research in the specific field of performing arts marketing

Art is considered a creative means to express one's feelings and thoughts and is the expression of freedom for individuals. The passion and the affinity for art in general, and for performing arts in particular determined the researcher to focus its entire attention in this area.

The dichotomy between artistic and marketing approaches is a prevalent aspect when considering the arts sector (Kotler & Scheff, 1997). Therefore, arts marketers are facing a real challenge when considering this aspect, struggling to find a balance between the artistic approach and the marketing approach, often considered to be antagonistic approaches. This challenge constitutes a strong motivation for the researcher of hereby paper to tackle the arts marketing field and to provide support for arts marketers to contribute alongside with the artists, in a joint effort, to the 'democratization of culture', ensuring educational benefits for the community. All the practical, academic and personal aspects previously stated, have straightened the need for a research in performing arts marketing and, therefore, this research aims to respond to these prevalent needs.

#### The research problem and the main objectives of the research

This paper offers a better understanding of the satisfaction concept from the perspective of the consumers of cultural institutions that are part of nonprofit branch, mostly forced by economical, political and social circumstances to adopt the same marketing strategies as the profit entities do.

Therefore, the general research problems of the present paper could be defined and one of these is to emphasize relevant aspects related to consumer behavior with respect to the theatre services. Another research problem is to know and understand the audiences of Romanian theatres. The last research problem is to highlight which are the proper means to operationalize and to measure customer satisfaction in the performing arts context, considering this construct in relationship with other constructs, such as attributes, benefits, goals and future intentions.

Considering the previous statements, the main objectives of the research could be highlighted and one of these objectives is to evaluate the perceptions of consumers regarding the services provided by a Romanian theatre. The second objective is to emphasize the customers` motivations that influence the performing arts attendance and the third one is to define the theatre consumer`s profile. The final objective of the hereby research is to develop and to test a conceptual model with respect to customer satisfaction in performing arts. The achievement of all these objectives could contribute to the improvement of cultural services provided by Romanian theatres and, additionally, to the democratization of culture to a wide range of audiences.

#### The structure of the present research

The research is organized into four chapters and contains two parts: the first one is related to theoretical aspects and the second one is related to research methodology, the performed analysis, the results of the research and the recommendations suggested by the author.

The first chapter of the research highlights the theoretical background and represents an incursion in arts marketing literature defining the concept and highlighting the role of arts marketing in the present cultural, social and economical context. It is also emphasized the relevant role of arts on both the individual and the public spheres, and how marketing contributes to the improvement of the activities of theatres.

In the second chapter the theoretical aspects related to the services provided by theatres are outlined. Therefore, the characteristics of cultural services and how these characteristics affect the theatres` activities are highlighted. Considering the services provided by theatres and their characteristics, the concept of extended marketing mix for cultural services is proposed, particularly for performing arts.

The third chapter highlights the theoretical background of customer satisfaction in performing arts, proposing several antecedents and consequences of this construct. This chapter also provides a clear explanation of the constructs (i.e. attributes, benefits, personal goals, consumer involvement, intention to recommend, intention to repurchase, intention to subscribe, intention to donate) that were used by the researcher to develop a new model concerning customer satisfaction in performing arts and it explains the relationship between constructs resorting to the means-end chain literature.

The fourth chapter presents the research methodology, the analysis, the results and the recommendations of the quantitative analysis performed using two different statistical programs (i.e. IBM SPSS Statistical Program and SMART PLS). On the one hand, the customers' perceptions related to the services provided by a Romanian theatre are emphasized, revealing the main motivations of theatregoers to attend performing arts shows, the main aspects considered by theatregoers when they choose the performing arts shows, and also defining the theatre consumer's profile from Romania, offering, therefore, the premises for services improvement. On the other hand, in this chapter, a conceptual model of customer satisfaction in performing arts is proposed, by considering the background of specialized literature. This model highlights the influence of several determinants on customer satisfaction in performing arts (i.e. attributes, benefits, personal goals) and also emphasizes several consequences of satisfaction (i.e. intention to repurchase, to donate, to subscribe and to recommend). The validity of the proposed model is tested using structural equation modeling techniques through the SMART PLS Statistical Software. In the end, several general conclusions, contributions of research to arts specialized literature, managerial implications, limitations of the study and also directions for future research are emphasized.

#### PART I – THEORETICAL ASPECTS RELATED TO ARTS MARKETING

## CHAPTER 1. ARTS MARKETING: DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS, CLASSIFICATION AND ROLE

In this chapter, several theoretical aspects concerning the arts marketing are emphasized. Therefore, in the first phase, several definitions for arts are stated even if it is considered that there is no universally accepted definition of it. According to Oxford Dictionary, art is defined as 'the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power'.

Further, in this chapter the characteristics and the classification of the artistic products are emphasized. According to the theory the artistic products are characterized by abstractness, subjectivity, and uniqueness. In the literature there are several ways to classify artistic products using, for example, its physical form (intangible cultural vs tangible cultural assets), the artist's intention (high art vs popular art), its artistic potential (emergent artistic potential vs emerged artistic potential), its effect on individuals (functional benefits, symbolic benefits, social benefits and emotional benefits) and also the provider's purposes (a product-oriented approach vs a customer-oriented approach). Therefore, the criteria used for the classification of artistic products are different, but many artistic products are commonly classified into several overlapping categories.

Several authors recognized the role of arts in society and considered it as well-determined through the benefits provided in the economy, tourism and well-being. Other authors emphasized a more intensive analysis of the benefits provided by arts, illustrating the intrinsic benefits that are inherent in arts experience and instrumental benefits which are indirect outcomes of arts experiences, considering them from three perspectives – private, private with public spillover and public. So, theatres, as nonprofit cultural institutions, should provide cultural services to their audiences (i.e. performing arts shows), as high arts services, with no explicit intent to affect the artistic vision to accommodate market needs. To achieve their mission in providing cultural values, theatres must implement specific strategies taking into account all the particularities of the field.

As it was specified by Gombault (1997) and Tobelem (1997) marketing was introduced in cultural institutions due to: the willingness to spread access to the culture, the increasing need for financial resources, the increasing level of intra- and extra-sectorial competition related to the leisure industry, and finally, a better understanding of the audiences (in Courvoisier &

Courvoisier, 2007). Arts marketing could contribute in several ways to the issues faced by cultural institutions: management for the mission, focus on core competencies, focus on quality, providing a better understanding of customers, creating accessibility, understanding the biases, take a long-term view, integrate the arts into everyday lives and generate a focus on art. Diggle (1976, pp. 5-9) stated that as a 'middle-man' between artists and audiences the arts marketer is concerned with how artistic products would be brought before a paying audience (in Lee, 2005b). Understanding and respecting the artworks and the creative work of the artist represents a prerequisite in the arts marketers` activity and, in this respect, arts marketing could be considered a 'bridge' between the artist and the customer.

Concerning the arts competition, several researchers considered that performing arts organizations compete against other activities provided by the leisure market. With respect to this statement, it could be concluded that performing arts institutions are facing a fiercely competitive environment when considering the free time of consumers. When considering the benefits provided by different entities, the competition for performing arts institutions is more restricted, in the sense that entertainment entities are not necessarily provide cultural benefits for consumers.

Arts demand studies explore concepts such as factors and motivations that influence the arts attendance and, in this respect, a special attention is requested from arts marketers in order to define their audience development strategies.

This chapter also provides precious information regarding the cultural consumption as an experience for consumers, emphasizing that the role of customers as co-producers is to provide means for a more personal and customized experience. Even if arts consumption is considered an experiential consumption and, according to literature, it is related to hedonic consumption, in evaluation of customer satisfaction is suitable to consider both utilitarian (i.e. quality of performing arts show, reasonable prices) and hedonic aspects (i.e. emotional elation).

A better understanding of the customers by arts marketers will lead to resource optimization and, therefore, to satisfactory outcomes. For defining a profile of cultural consumer, particularly of highbrow consumers, all the socio-demographic characteristics reported in this chapter are relevant for arts marketers. In this respect, considering the particularities of the audiences, arts marketers could develop efficient segmenting and positioning strategies.

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#### **CHAPTER 2. EXTENDED MARKETING MIX IN PERFORMING ARTS**

The second chapter provides insights of theatre services and in the first part of the chapter is pointed out the difference between goods and services and are also emphasized and described the characteristics of the services. According to the specialized literature, goods can be defined as objects, devices or things, meanwhile services can be defined as deeds, efforts or performances. Hill et al. (1995) suggested that the theatres provide to their audiences services rather than physical goods, so the services are characterized through: (1) intangibility; (2) inseparability; (3) heterogeneity; (4) perishability. It is also highlighted how these characteristics of services affect the activity of service providers and, in this respect, several strategies to overcome the challenges are recommended.

Considering all these service characteristics, several authors proposed for the service organizations the idea of expanded marketing mix that contains all the traditional marketing mix elements (product, price, place, promotion), but alongside these, other three elements are added: physical evidences, people, and processes. In this chapter the expanded marketing mix for the theatre services is particularized and specific marketing strategies for each element of marketing mix are recommended. It is considered that in performing arts sector the services are divided into: the core services which comprise the performance and all the factors that support its display (stage setting, actors, lighting and audio) and the peripheral services which support and facilitate the core offering, including amenities, venue and contact personnel, cloaking, accessibility, communal waiting areas, public transport, parking, customer flow and ticketing (Hume, 2008a). The marketing strategies, concerned on extended marketing mix particularly in the arts context, offer the premises of an integrative approach for more and more sophisticated cultural consumers. In arts marketing literature is emphasized that arts experiences of the audience could be provided by the arts organization without changing its core products such as actual performances or exhibitions and, in these conditions, the customer satisfaction is maximized changing or modifying augmented products that add value to the core activities (McLean, 1997).

According to Bernstein (2007), strategic marketing includes three steps: segmentation, targeting and positioning. Therefore, the marketers need to identify the appropriate criteria to segment the market, to select the segments which represent their targets and, finally, to develop the positioning strategies. In the final part of the chapter are pointed out several aspects particularized for performing arts marketing context concerning the segmentation, targeting and positioning strategies.

## CHAPTER 3. MEANS-END CHAIN THEORY APPLIED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL REGARDING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN PERFORMING ARTS

The third chapter provides the means for the development of the customer satisfaction model, explaining the basic constructs used in the model. In this respect, the core and peripheral service attributes of performing arts services, the benefits provided through arts consumption, the consumers' goals regarding the performing arts consumption experience, the concept of customer satisfaction in performing arts, the consumer's involvement and the future intentions of customers are explored. Several authors which treated the marketing in performing arts agreed that there is a distinction between the core service and the additional services or peripheral services. Considering the case of the performing arts, it is stated that researchers and performing arts managers split the entire experience in core offering and service offering, meanwhile theatre customers will not separate their experience: the one of the show and the other one related to elements of the offering, perceiving it as an entire experience (Hume et al., 2007). The assessment of the customer's perception regarding the personal experience in the theatre is likely to result from the perceptions of both core service (the performing arts show) and peripheral services (including different facilities, parking, atmosphere) (Hume et al., 2007). As Hume & Sullivan Mort (2008) stated, the core service is the main reason for a company to exist on the market and, for the performing arts context, it is represented by the display and its performance of acting. According to Hume et al. (2006), the core service includes the stage, stage settings, actors, lighting, and audio. Peripheral services are those which support the core offering but are not part of the core and include venue quality, the foyer and waiting areas, amenities, contact personnel, accessibility factors (signposting, parking and public transport), cloaking, ticketing, refreshments and customer flow (Hume et al., 2006). Considering the statement of Hume et al. (2007), according to which consumers evaluate the core services and peripheral services as an entire experience, the author of the present research suggests a connection between core and peripheral services in performing arts.

The benefits provided by performing arts institutions to audiences are various, ranging, citing Throsby (1990), from entertainment, recreation, psychological, emotional and intellectual stimulation of individual to active participation, audience involvement and, subsequently, to cultural preservation and economic advantages. The benefits provided through arts consumption represent a challenging subject for arts marketers and, in contrast to art-related consumers` goals which are inherently intrinsic to consumers, the benefits construct can be

better 'marketised' by arts marketers. For example, the marketers could extend the range of benefits that are provided to consumers increasing the product/service attributes or, simply, developing and engaging consumers in different activities which provide them extra benefits. For the present research, considering the performing arts consumption, the following benefits are approached: aesthetic benefits, functional benefits, social benefits, hedonic benefits, epistemic benefits and affective benefits.

Next in this chapter, the consumers' goals are defined and classified and, additionally, the process of goals formation and achievement is emphasized. In consumer behavior practices it is stated that the formation of goal concepts and all goal-directed actions take place in various stages. The first stage highlighted in the literature is goal setting, followed up by the goal striving stage and in the present research both stages are defined and described. Therefore, the role played by goals in consumer research, particularly in arts consumption which is often considered a hedonic consumption is essential. Concerning the goals that consumers desire to achieve through arts consumption, range from seeking entertainment to personal development (Kerrigan et al., 2004). Other authors such as Bergadaà & Nyerck (1995) asserted that escapism and entertainment, edutainment, personal enrichment and social hedonism are motivational approaches of theatergoers, and they even performed a separation of theatregoers concerning intellectual stimulation and sensory experience. Therefore, the motivations for arts consumption are various and for the arts marketers represent the premise of marketing strategies development.

Furthermore, the theoretical concept of satisfaction in performing arts is defined and several antecendents and consequences stated in the literature are emphasized. Customer satisfaction is a subjective concept being the outcome of individual judgment, depending by circumstances and being understood in terms of psychological, social and physical variables (Ambrož & Praprotnik, 2008). In his book, Oliver (2010) treated satisfaction as a broadened concept, from the customer's perspective, the firm's perspective, the industry's perspective and the societal perspective. In the present research, the customer's perspective is approached, thus, the definitions highlight the concept of satisfaction considering the customer's perspective. Adapting Oliver's statement (1996) to theatrical field, Boerner et al. (2011, p. 879) defined customer satisfaction as 'the spectator's judgement that the theatrical event provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or over- fulfillment'. In the marketing literature, it is stated that the customer satisfaction is influenced by various determinants such as service quality, perceived value of service and perceived equity of service, organizational effectiveness and also by the consumers'

personality. Considering the studies of customer satisfaction in performing arts, Hume et al. (2007) identified a category of consumers for which the artistic objectives were insufficient in their evaluation of performing arts satisfaction, requiring an exhaustive evaluation and, for this particular category of consumers, several factors (accessibility and parking, ease of attendance, access to value food and beverage, flow and signposting of venues, staff friendliness and price) were identified as antecedents of value and satisfaction. For these consumers, value-for-money and value-for-time represent the most important determinants of satisfaction in performing arts context. Therefore, customer satisfaction must be approached from an exhaustive perspective considering customer characteristics, services characteristics and, also, the situational factors. The satisfaction construct has several consequences on the consumers' behavior and, implicitly, on the organization performance. For the present research, positive behaviors are considered, therefore, those positive outcomes stated in the marketing literature are presented in this chapter. Satisfied consumers tend to manifest the following positive consequences related to a consumption experience: repurchase the services, compliment the services or generate positive word of mouth. Another consequence which is common for both satisfied and disatisfied customers is non-reaction and assumes no changes in customer behaviors after their consumption experience (Peluso, 2011). According to specialized literature, customer satisfaction affects customer loyalty and behavioral intentions and particularly, in the case of performing arts, actions such as repurchase intention, positive word of mouth, subscribing intentions, donations of time and money, media reviews regarding the services performed by theatres are willing to occur if customers are satisfied with the services. Hence, the positive consequences of customer satisfaction consistently affect the well-being of an organization and, for providing a satisfying experience to its customers, the management team should allocate more resources to understand which are the customers` expectations.

This chapter also provides insights concerning consumers involvement, particularly defining the concept, emphasizing the types of involvement and the ways to measure this construct. In this study, involvement refers to the extent to which the consumer considers the object, in this case, the services provided by the theatres as meaningful in their lives.

Another relevant aspect pointed out in this chapter is the use of the means-end chain theory usage in explaining customer satisfaction. Means-end chain theory, proposed by Gutman (1982), often postulated in motivational literature, contributes to understanding motivational theories behind consumers` decision of product selection (in Peluso, 2011). Considering the theory proposed by Gutman (1982), 'means' represent product attributes while 'ends'

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represent motivational goals or personal values (i.e. pleasure). According to this theory, consumers choose a product with attributes that provide them particular beneficial consequences that, in turn, will satisfy their personal values associated with such benefits (Kitsawad & Guinard, 2014). Hence, the achievement of a relevant goal for consumer contributes to stronger outcomes such as customer satisfaction. In their study, Garbarino & Johnson (2001) evaluated the effect of theatre attributes (plays, actors, theatre facilities and theatre location) on overall satisfaction, considering the consumers` goals. Their study revealed that customers` goals determine which attributes formulate overall satisfaction, or in other words, the attributes which contribute to the achievement of consumers` goals determine the overall satisfaction.

In this chapter it is also explained the moderator effect of the involvement on the relationship between benefits and goals and on the relationship between benefits and satisfaction. Lee et al. (2010) stated that involvement is an important moderator which influences the purchase decisions. In marketing, it was found that involvement moderates the decision-making process of consumers and the attitude-behavioral relationships, being acknowledged that consumers respond in different ways considering low and high involvement situations. Consistently with the literature, it could be asserted that the involvement intensity affects the information search process, the manner in which customers evaluate the provided services and also the future behaviors in which the customer may be engaged.

In the end of the chapter are pointed out several future positive intentions of consumers, as consequences of customer satisfaction. Intentions are considered by several researchers (Boulding et al., 1993; Soderlund & Ohman, 2003) subjective judgments which reflect how a person will behave in the future (in Yap & Kew, 2007). Tao (2013, p. 1535) defined behavioral intention as 'consumers' future intentions towards the repurchase of, recommendation of and tolerance of price increases for artworks'. Zeithaml et al. (1996) suggested that favorable behavioral intentions imply saying positive things, recommending company, remaining loyal to the company, spending more with the company and paying premium prices for their services. In theatre context, future intentions are described in terms of future attendance, subscriptions and donations (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Considering all these statements, for the present research in performing arts context, the following future positive intentions are considered: the intention to recommend, the intention to repurchase, the intention to subscribe and, finally, the intention to donate and, in this chapter, are all presented.

## PART II – STUDY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION REGARDING THE CULTURAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY ROMANIAN THEATRES

## **CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The fourth chapter describes the marketing research process used for the present study and comprises several steps: (1) formulating the problem and the objectives of research; (2) selecting the method of inquiry; (3) selecting the research method; (4) defining the research design; (5) defining data collection techniques; (6) elaborating the sample design; (7) data collection; (8) analysis and interpretation and (9) reporting the results. All these steps were particularized for the present research. Additionally, in this chapter is described the model of customer satisfaction in performing arts proposed by the author of the present study, illustrating at the same time the main literature and the logics which supported the development of the model. The aim of the proposed model is to provide the means for practitioners to enhance cultural activities performed by theatres especially by increasing customer satisfaction. By proposing such a model the researcher desires to provide a semnificative contribution to the arts marketing literature. The customer satisfaction model proposed in the present study is a new one and was developed starting from the means-end chain theory (Gutman 1982, 1997, in Peluso, 2011). The proposed model is emphasized in the following figure:

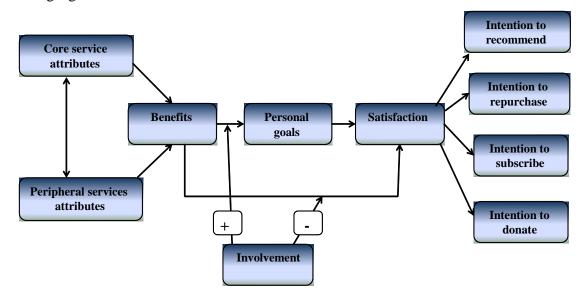


Figure 1 - The proposed model: Customer satisfaction in performing arts Source: proposed by the author

Based on the model's structure are emphasized nine different hypotheses of the hereby study. These research hypothesis were validated or respectively invalidated after the statistical analysis of collected data was proceeded. H1: There is an inter-dependence, characterized by a positive correlation, between both the core service and peripheral service attributes

H2: Perceived attributes` performance regarding both the core services and the peripheral services will positively influence the benefits provided to customers.

H3: The involvement positively moderates the relationship between the benefits and the consumers` personal goals.

H3a. When involvement is high, consumers` perceptions of goals fulfillment is positively influenced by perceived benefits.

H3b. When involvement is low, consumers` perceptions of goals fulfillment is not influenced by perceived benefits.

H4: The involvement negatively moderates the relationship between the benefits and consumer satisfaction.

H4a. When involvement is high, consumers` perception of satisfaction is not influenced by perceived benefits.

H4b. When involvement is low, consumers` perception of satisfaction is positively influenced by perceived benefits.

H5: *The consumers*` *personal goals mediate the relationship between benefits perceived by customers and their satisfaction.* 

H6: The customer satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention to recommend the services provided by theatres.

H7: The customer satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention to repurchase the services provided by theatres.

H8: The customer satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention to subscribe to the services provided by theatres.

H9: The customer satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention to donate to the theatres.

The role of this chapter is also to underline the findings, as a result of the data analysis performed by the author using both IBM SPSS Statistics and SMART PLS Program. In this respect, the results concerning the customers' perceptions related to the services provided by a particular Romanian theatre (i.e. 'Anonymous' theatre) suggested that customers are, generally speaking, satisfied by the core services provided by the considered theatre. Contrarily, the peripheral services of the theatre obtained lower scores, suggesting that arts marketers need to concentrate their efforts in this direction.

 Table 1 - The perception of respondents concerning the satisfaction with the services provided by the

 'Anonymous' theatre

| Are you satisfied by   | Ν   | Min. | Max. | Mean |
|--|-----|------|------|------|
| the shows performed by this theatre?   | 144 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.91 |
| the ambiance, atmosphere and parking facilities of this theatre?                           | 147 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.90 |
| the prices performed by this theatre?  | 148 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.89 |
| the personnel working in this theatre (the front office personnel)?                        | 146 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.83 |
| the way in which this theatre delivers its services?                                       | 144 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.68 |
| the processes implemented by this theatre in order to facilitate your access to its shows? | 148 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.64 |
| by the promotion techniques approached by this theatre?                                    | 144 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.58 |
| As a general perception, are you satisfied by the services provided by this theatre?       | 143 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 |

## Source: provided by the author

When considering the main motivations stated by cultural consumers with respect to performing arts consumption, the following aspects are emphasized:

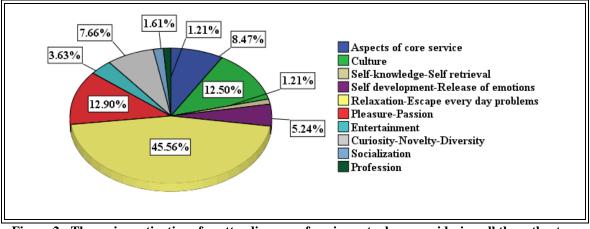


Figure 2 - The main motivations for attending a performing arts show considering all three theatres involved in the survey

#### Source: performed by the author

An interesting aspect is that cultural consumers are primarily interested in having a relaxing experience and escaping from their daily problems, rather than improving their cultural capital. In this context, arts marketers need to position the cultural services as a leisure relaxing alternative, but a special attention should be approached, considering that most of leisure providers follow the same strategy. The hedonic interest of cultural consumers, with respect to the cultural consumption, contradicts sometimes the aesthetic and artistic purposes which mostly require additional cultural background and efforts of the consumers to be completely immersed in theatrical experience.

The findings of the research regarding the profile of the Romanian theatre consumer can be empahsized as follows:

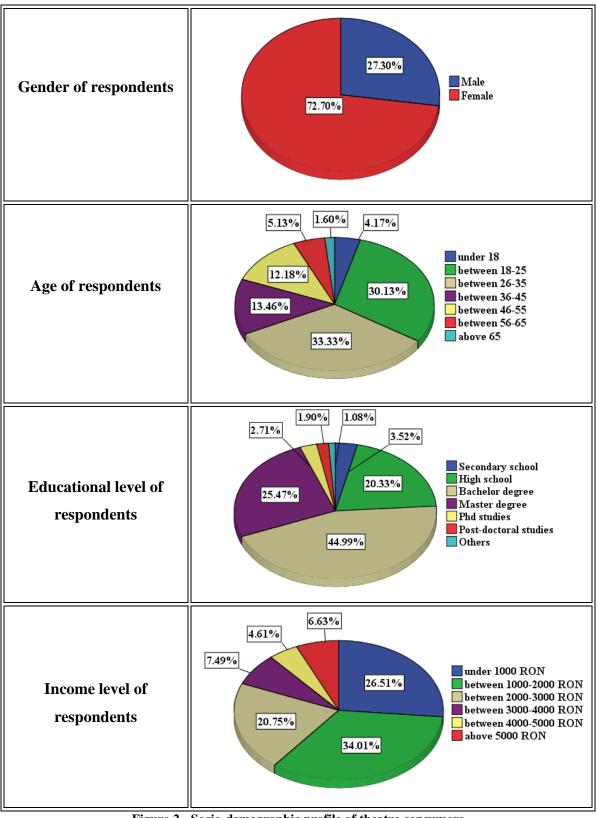


Figure 2 - Socio-demographic profile of theatre consumers Source: performed by the author

In this chapter are also included several means in order to test the validity of the proposed model, particularly the causal relationships between the constructs of the proposed customer satisfaction model. In this respect, there are presented the arguments for choosing a particular

statistical program (i.e. SMART PLS Program) in order to demonstrate de proposed conceptual model. Before performing the PLS-SEM analysis the author of the present study managed the missing data values through specific techniques. An outlier diagnostics and a non-normality test were also undertaken before performing PLS-SEM analysis. Next in this chapter are emphasized the PLS-SEM algorithm options selected by the author in order to perform the statistical analysis.

For testing the first hypothesis, that the core service attributes and peripheral service attributes are characterized by a positive correlation, the Pearson's correlation test was performed using SPSS Statistical Program. The findings suggested that between the core service attributes and peripheral service attributes there is a strong positive relationship (see also Table 2).

To test the next hypotheses, the measurement model assessment was performed using SMART PLS Program. The complexity of the proposed model required that the measurement model assessment to be conducted in two stages. Particularly, the author of the present research tested the validity of the first order formative measurement model and then tested the validity of the second order formative measurement model. As a result of this process all the indicators were retained and the structural model assessment was performed.

In assessing the structural model, Hair et al. (2014) recommend the following procedure: (1) assess structural model for collinearity issues, (2) assess the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships, (3) assess the level of  $R^2$ , (4) assess the effect sizes  $f^2$  and (5) assess the predictive relevance  $Q^2$  and the  $q^2$  effect sizes. All these procedures were undertaken and the findings are summarized in the Table 2.

When considering the global model assessment, Henseler et al. (2014) recommended the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) as a goodness of fit measure for PLS-SEM and the results suggested a good model fit to data.

Furthermore, the mediator effect of goals on the relationship between benefits and satisfaction was tested and the findings confirmed the hypothesis (see also Table 2). The author also tested the moderator effect of involvement on the relationship between benefits and personal goals (corresponding to H3 hypothesis) and the moderator effect of involvement on the relationship between benefits and satisfaction (corresponding to H4 hypothesis) and the findings partially confirmed the hypotheses.

| Table 2 - Research | hypotheses | confirmation |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
|--------------------|------------|--------------|

| Hypothesis 1   |   | ter-dependence, characterized by a positive correlation, between      |              |  |
|--|---|---|--------------|--|
| Hypothesis 1   | both the core   | e service and peripheral services attributes                          | $\checkmark$ |  |
| II   | Perceived att   | ributes` performance regarding both the core services and the         |              |  |
| Hypothesis 2   | <b>ypothesis 2</b> peripheral services will positively influence the benefits provided to customers |   |              |  |
|  | The involvement positively moderates the relationship between the benefits and                      |   |              |  |
|  | the consumers' personal goals   |   | +            |  |
|  |   | When involvement is high, consumers` perceptions of goals             |              |  |
| Hypothesis 3   | H3a   | fulfillment is positively influenced by perceived benefits            | $\checkmark$ |  |
|  |   | When involvement is low, consumers' perceptions of goals              |              |  |
|  | H3b   |   | ×            |  |
|  | The investment  | fulfillment is not influenced by perceived benefits                   | ~            |  |
|  |   | nent negatively moderates the relationship between the benefits       |              |  |
|  | and consume   |   | Ť            |  |
| Hypothesis 4   | H4a   | When involvement is high, consumers' perception of satisfaction       | 4.5          |  |
|  |   | is not influenced by perceived benefits                               | ×            |  |
|  | H4b   | When involvement is low, consumers` perception of satisfaction        | ,            |  |
|  |   | is positively influenced by perceived benefits.                       | $\checkmark$ |  |
| Uupothosis 5   | The consume   | ers` personal goals mediate the relationship between benefits         | $\checkmark$ |  |
| Hypothesis 5 perceived by customers and their satisfaction                       |   |   |              |  |
| The customer satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention |   |   |              |  |
| Hypothesis 6   | to recommen   | d the services provided by theatres                                   | $\checkmark$ |  |
| Hermotheoria 7   | The custome   | r satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention |              |  |
| Hypothesis 7   | to repurchase   | e the services provided by theatres                                   | $\checkmark$ |  |
| Uumothogic 9   | The custome   | r satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention |              |  |
| Hypothesis 8   | to subscribe to the services provided by theatres   |   |              |  |
| Hypothesis 9   | The customer satisfaction in performing arts positively influences the intention                    |   |              |  |
| Trypotties is 9  | to donate for   | the theatres  | $\checkmark$ |  |
|  |   | ✓ confirmed hypothesis  |              |  |
|  |   | ✗ not supported hypothesis  |              |  |
|  |   | + partially confirmed hypothesis                                      |              |  |

## Source: performed by the author

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The results revealed the particular issues related to the theatrical services, and thus new techniques were recommended to be approached in order to improve the theatre's activity and to stimulate in this way cultural consumption:

- When considering the core services, consumers devote interest not solely to the performers but also to adjacent elements such as lighting and sound.
- Pricing strategies should be carefully defined especially for the extra products (i.e. water, juices) and concerning the subscription programs the bundling technique may be considered.

- Customers manifested a need to reach information from diversified media channels and from non-conventional promotion strategies
- Consumers are expecting a greater availability regarding traditional ticketing acquisition and, in this respect, Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVM) was recommended.
- The queuing issues need to be minimized, the customer assistance systems (i.e. problem solving by phone) should be improved, and the perspective of complaint management should be approached by the theatres.
- Parking facilities, alongside other peripheral services, even if these could be considered as irrelevant, especially in the arts context, have a relevant role for those customers who are not directly interested in the artistic product and rather see theatre as an alternative to escape from daily problems and for relaxation, searching a comfortable experience
- Satisfied consumers provide invaluable benefits for cultural institutions by spreading positive word of mouth and, therefore, a special attention is requested when considering the loyal consumers.
- In order to attract potential customers who are primarily interested in social interaction, theatres could develop projects for the community, facilitating the interaction between its audience members.
- The unused space of the theatre could be rented for different events, thus obtaining extra funds.
- Theatres could organize volunteer-based activities for children in a specially designed place inside of the theatre, where consumers bring their kids and let them stay there during a performing arts show, so they can enjoy the performance.
- Theatres could also develop partnerships with different companies that are willing to encourage arts attendance by offering non-monetary benefits to their employees.

It is recommended for theatres to position themselves as a relaxing alternative considering that the main motivations stated by consumers for theatre attendance are relaxation and pleasure, but at the same time, to maintain their artistic identity.

Considering the theatre consumer's profile from Romania, the present study confirmed an increased attendance of women and suggested that highly-educated individuals are particularly more involved in high arts consumption. The study emphasized that younger

people attend the theatre more often than older people and that the income level is characterized as low-medium.

The proposed conceptual model which considered both the attributes of the cultural services provided by theatres and the consumers` inner states was tested through structural equation modeling techniques, and the results suggested several interesting aspects:

- In this respect, between core service attributes and peripheral service attributes an inter-dependence was found, characterized by a positive correlation, suggesting that marketers should not neglect the core services to the detriment of peripheral services and vice versa.
- In performing arts context, both the core service attributes and the peripheral service attributes influence the benefits perceived by consumers. An interesting result is that the peripheral service attributes provided by the considered theatres exert a stronger influence on the benefits perceived by customers than the core service attributes.
- The results also confirmed the mediator role of personal goals on the relationship between the benefits perceived by customers and their satisfaction. In other words, the achievement of consumer's personal goals represent means through which they achieve satisfaction.
- According to the results of the present study, satisfaction is a predictor for intention to recommend, intention to subscribe, intention to repurchase and intention to donate, confirming previous studies of Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Cronin et al., 2000; Hume et al., 2007; Boerner et al., 2011; Naskrent & Siebelt, 2011.
- The results confirm the previous studies suggesting that the impact of benefits on goals is greater in the case of highly involved consumers than in the case of low involved consumers, and that the impact of benefits on satisfaction is greater in the case of low involved consumers than in the case of highly involved consumers.
- Highly involved consumers are more willing to subscribe and to donate

As a general conclusion, the proposed conceptual model is confirmed through the empirical analysis, and although several adjustments are required, it could be successfully implemented in the Romanian performing arts context.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH TO THE PERFORMING ARTS MARKETING LITERATURE

The findings contribute in several ways to the arts marketing literature. Firstly, by developing and validating a conceptual model of customer satisfaction in performing arts with a predictive function, new directions of research could be undertaken. Secondly, by introducing the means-end chain theory in the performing arts marketing literature, which offers a great perspective for researchers to understand the customer behavior mechanism considering both extrinsic elements to consumers (i.e. attributes) and intrinsic elements to consumers (i.e. personal goals). Also, the findings demonstrated the importance of service attributes, the benefits perceived by consumers and the achievement of consumers` personal goals in evaluating customer satisfaction in performing arts and, subsequently, the influence of customer satisfaction on positive future intentions. Previous researches in performing arts context considered as consequences of customer satisfaction only the repurchase intention, but in this research the intention to recommend, intention to donate and to subscribe were additionally considered. The findings also revealed the relative high importance of peripheral service in performing arts context compared to the core services. The moderator effect of involvement revealed different behaviors engaged by highly involved consumers as opposed to low involved consumers, supporting the findings of previous research.

A general finding emphasized by the present research is that consumers seek an exhaustive experience which integrates an intensive evaluation of the provided services, engaging subjective and objective criteria in this process. Another important aspect revealed by the present research is the prevalent desire of Romanian consumers to be engaged in a relaxing and pleasurable experience rather than in an experience which provide cultural enrichment.

#### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research provide support for arts managers considering the performing arts context, offering the means for action in order to improve cultural consumption. Firstly, the results support the idea that customer satisfaction is a predictor for future positive intentions (i.e. the intention to recommend, the intention to repurchase, the intention to subscribe and the intention to donate) and, considering this aspect, arts managers should focus their efforts in maximizing the customer satisfaction by improving their services (i.e. providing parking facilities for customers). The findings of the research emphasize the importance of peripheral services in adding value to the core service for consumers, thus, arts marketers need to shift from solely focusing on the core services, and increase their interest in the peripheral services. In this respect, considering the prevalent need of cultural institutions to expand their market and to attract audience members in the cultural consumption process, the findings provide means for segmenting strategies in performing arts context in terms of benefits, goals and consumer involvement. Each segment of customers requires a customized marketing approach

with respect to the marketing communication, pricing (especially auxiliary products – i.e. juice), and even functional processes. Also, arts marketers should improve the parking facilities, develop interactive projects for community and unconventional promoting strategies, emphasizing in promoting messages the opportunity for relaxation and cultural enrichment.

Certainly, as the research suggested, individuals who are primarily interested in achieving the cultural enrichment goal will have different approaches related to cultural consumption than individuals who are primarily interested to find a relaxing and comfortable experience. According to the results of the present study the following categories of consumers could be emphasized: those interested about relaxation, those interested to have a pleasurable experience, those interested to have fun during the consumption, novelty seekers, socializers, emotion seekers, cultural enrichment seekers and those interested due to their professional state. Therefore, high arts managers could implement different positioning strategies in performing arts context. The reponsability of arts marketers is to protect the artistic product/service or, in other words, the core services, by exerting their efforts on the peripheral services, without affecting the artistic value. High arts managers should devote special attention to increasing the consumer involvement with respect to the services provided by cultural institutions. Marketers should also monitor their customers regarding the frequency of attendance and the level of involvement in order to define future strategies. Arts managers activating in cultural institutions may adopt several strategies applied by independent theatres in order to develop fundraising campaigns, offering in this way the opportunity to donate to those willing to do this. Also, they could develop volunteer-based activities for children, thus, the consumers may bring their kids to the theatre for participating in those activities, so they can fully enjoy the performance. Arts marketers need to develop several partnerships with schools in order to introduce youth in the world of performing arts by developing projects especially for them. They also could propose the development of the performing arts school curriculum and to stimulate in this way the interest of the little ones for the cultural activities. Related to their activity, high arts marketers are dealing with difficult responsibilities, facing the dichotomy between achieving the artistic mission and responding to the competitive pressure and, in this respect, they should approach a customer-oriented strategy without influencing the artistic vision.

#### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Even if the study provides both theoretical and practical approaches it must be assumed that it can have a series of limitations.

Firstly, due to financial limitations, for the study a small sample size was considered. Considering all the techniques that were undertaken in order to deal with the missing values and outliers, the number of valid questionnaires was reduced (from 470 observations to 300 observations) but, according to Willis & Snowball (2009) and Hume & Sullivan Mort (2008), the sample is relevant for performing arts context. In future research, alternative methods for data collection could be engaged in order to obtain a better response rate by using, for example, online surveys. Since several indicators used for constructs measurement have not been validated in previous studies, the questionnaire could be tested in a separate sample. As sampling method for the present research, the convenience method was used, due to both financial and time limitations and a new sampling method could be considered in the future studies.

Due to the lack of an available database with all theatre customers, the researcher considered the theatregoers reachable at the theatre's location, specifically, from three National Theatres in Romania, from the same region. It would be instructive for future studies to consider the proposed model in other exhaustive contexts, such as other theatres from different regions of Romania and even from different countries, in order to establish if these findings are unique for that particular region of Romania. In future studies, the number of the theatres considered for research could be increased. The results are particularly applicable to the performing arts context but future studies may explore the applicability of the proposed model in other adjacent fields such as museums, opera and philharmonics.

The constructs proposed for the model could be measured considering also reflective measures. In the present research, due to considerable length of questionnaire and, therefore, the likelihood of decreased response rates and increased missing value rates, reflective measures that could be correlated with formative measures of the same construct were not included. This technique is proposed by several authors in order to test the convergent validity.

The hereby research does not explore the effect of socio-demographic variables on the proposed model, even though significant differences between men and women in terms of cultural consumption are well-recognized in arts marketing literature. Therefore, future research could explore the moderator effect of socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, income on the customer satisfaction model. Another relevant moderator of the

relationships established between constructs could be considered the frequency of attendance (i.e. subscribers vs non-subscribers).

All these recommendations proposed in this section could improve the present research, having important contributions to the performing arts marketing literature.

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